

# Policy Approaches to Addressing Lack of Access to Specialty Care

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*2024 Arizona Rural & Public Health Policy Forum*

# Agenda

## Rural disparities in specialty care

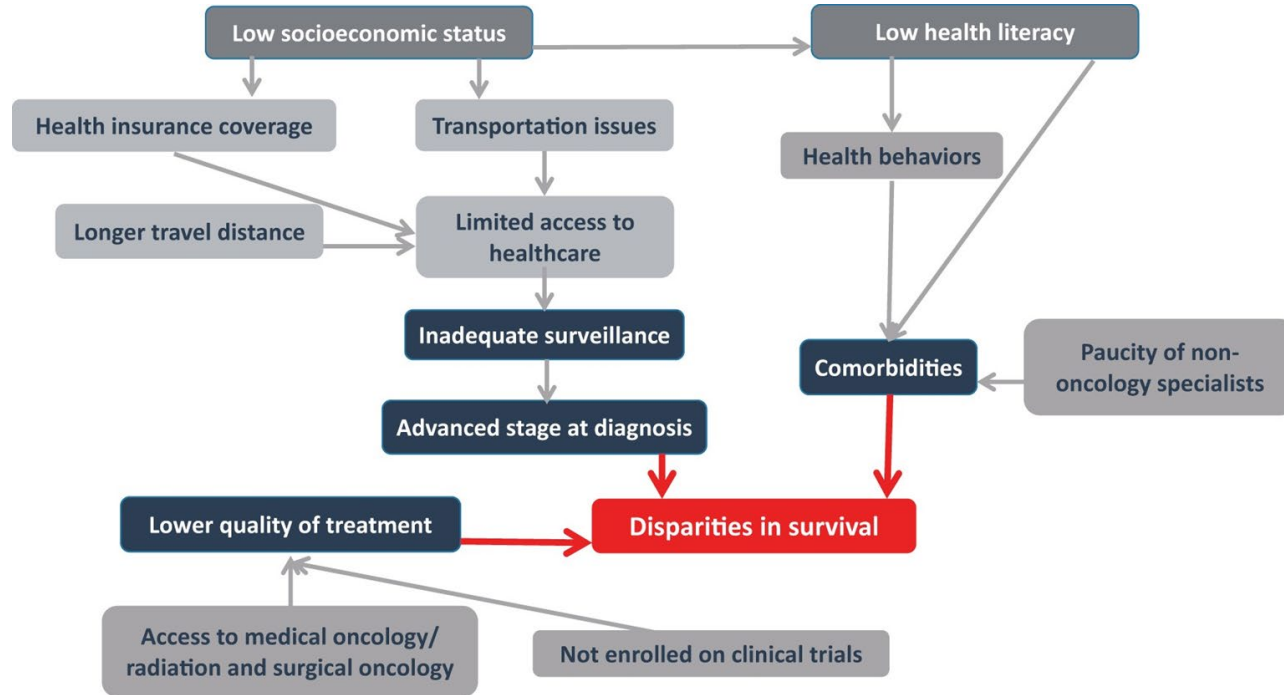
- Case: cancer care and survivorship outcomes
  - Workforce
  - Health insurance coverage
  - Social determinants of health

## Policy approaches to addressing disparities

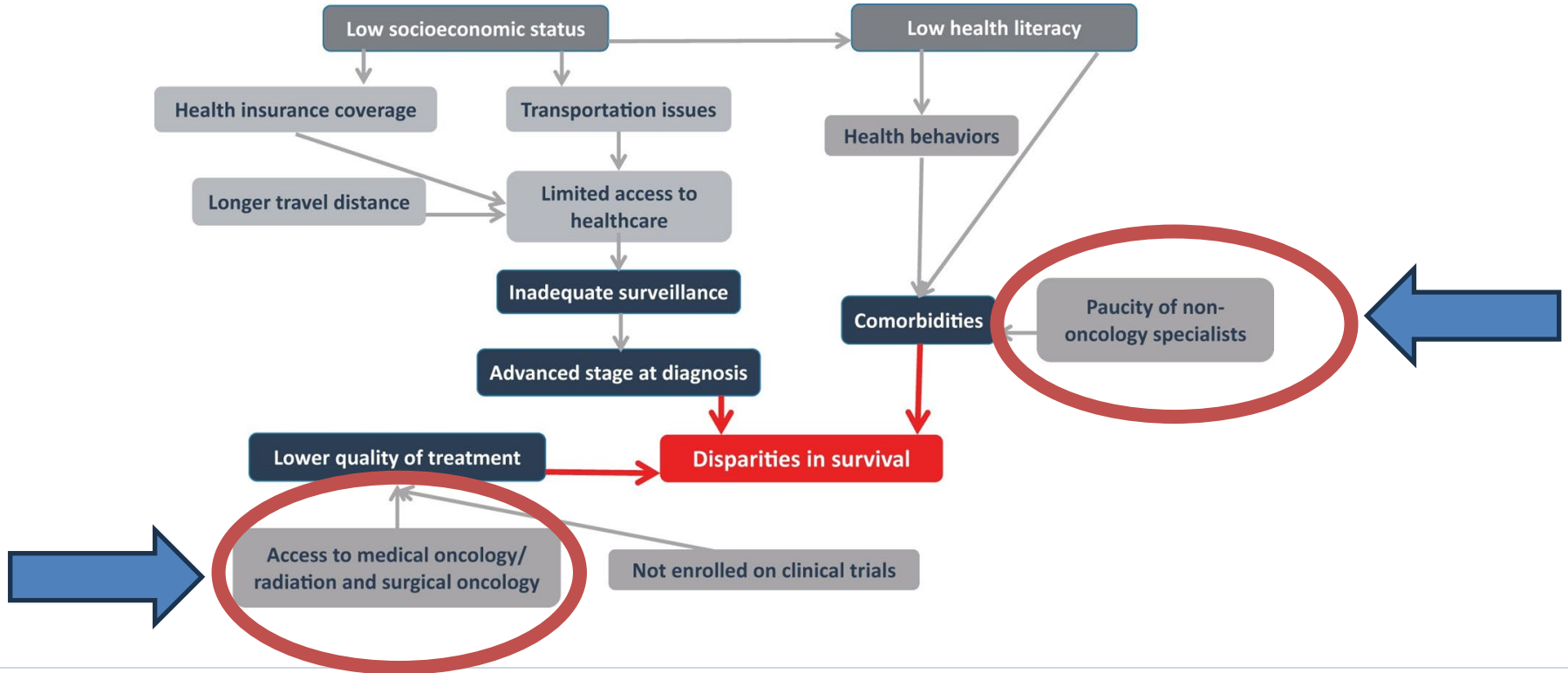
- Promoting workforce availability
  - Connectivity
  - Expanding the health care team
- Making health insurance coverage accessible



# From Journal of the National Cancer Institute: Causes of rural–urban disparities in survival.



# From Journal of the National Cancer Institute: Causes of rural–urban disparities in survival.



# Rural Case: Willcox

- According to National Rural Health Association (2023), rural communities have 30/100,000 specialists versus urban communities 258/100,000
- Willcox has visiting specialists for cardiology, podiatry and OB/GYN—but no access to cancer care services
- Aging community with many chronic conditions, inability to travel to urban centers



# Workforce Shortages

## Informing Health Workforce Policy

STATE OF  
ARIZONA  
RANK

Provider Type

IN ARIZONA PER 100,000

IN U.S. PER 100,000

42

Primary Care  
Physicians

80 95

31

Total Physicians

252 287

28

Physician Assistant

47 48

42

Registered Nurses

1,400 1,550

46

Physical Therapy

59 67

32

Nurse Practitioners

48 52

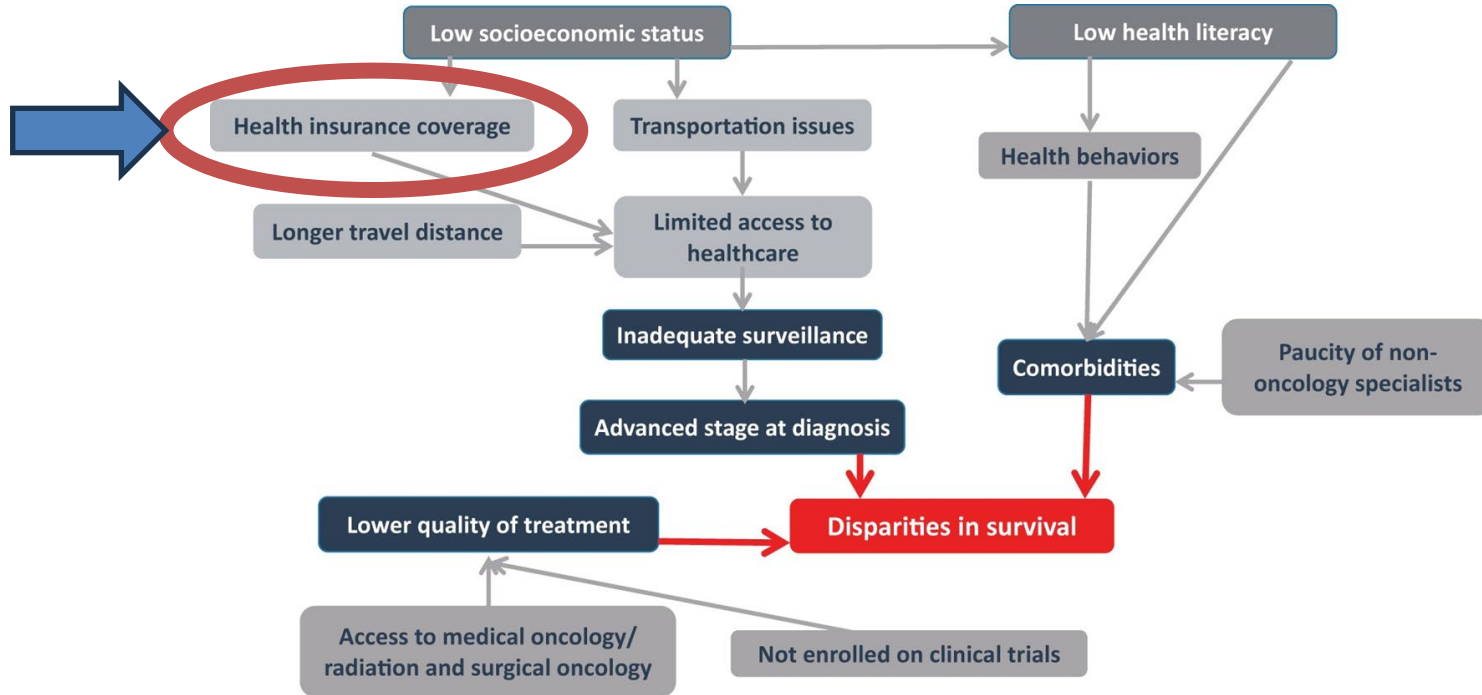
29

Direct Care Workers  
\*note per 10,000

103 107



# From Journal of the National Cancer Institute: Causes of rural–urban disparities in survival.



# Lack of health insurance – Medicaid as solution for some

## Medicaid coverage for adults 18-64 in US

- 18% in small towns and rural areas
- 15% of adults in metro counties

## Medicaid Coverage for adults 18-64 in Arizona

- 29% in small towns and rural areas
- 17% in metro counties





# Lack of health insurance – Who remains uninsured?

- People with “limited English proficiency” (Bosworth) make up a large portion of uninsured in some parts of the U.S.
  - Disproportionality of Latinx & Black individuals (Bosworth)
  - Half (50%) of likely undocumented immigrant adults (KFF)
  - One in five (18%) lawfully present immigrant adults (KFF)
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- Bosworth A, Finegold K, and Ruhter J. The Remaining Uninsured: Geographic and Demographic Variation (Issue Brief No. HP-2021-06). Washington, DC: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. March 23, 2021.
  - Kaiser Family Foundation: <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/fact-sheet/key-facts-on-health-coverage-of-immigrants/>
-

# End of Pandemic-Era Federal Support

12% cut in people covered by AHCCCS

## Rural Arizona faces health insurance crisis

Jan. 12, 2024

Peter Aleshire | White Mountain Independent

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Policy  
Approaches to  
Addressing  
Disparities in  
Care: *Workforce  
Availability*



# Policy Approaches to Addressing Workforce Availability

- Programs that promote specialty care in rural areas (Specialists in urban areas so busy, no need to go out to the rural)
- Telemedicine (connectivity is still an issue, more funds to improve broadband connection, insurance payments)
- Loan repayment programs
- Pipeline programs and recruiting those with “Rural DNA”

# Programs/incentives to Recruit Health Care Providers

Of 247 programs/incentives:

- 218 (88%) focused on recruitment (versus retention)
- 125 (51%) focused on PCPs
- Types of programs/incentives
  - 70 (28%) loan repayment
  - 48 (19%) J-1 Visa waivers
  - 28 (11%) scholar programs (AHEC)
  - 101 (41%) education programs/scholarships (e.g. for medical students)

Arredondo K, Touchett HN, Khan S, Vincenti M, Watts BV. Current Programs and Incentives to Overcome Rural Physician Shortages in the United States: A Narrative Review. *J Gen Intern Med.* 2023 Jul;38(Suppl 3):916-922. doi: 10.1007/s11606-023-08122-6. Epub 2023 Jun 20. PMID: 37340266; PMCID: PMC10356718.

Policy  
Approaches to  
Addressing  
Disparities in  
Care: *Health  
Insurance Access*





SEPTEMBER 2022

**PATHWAYS TO  
IMPROVE ARIZONA'S  
PUBLIC BENEFITS  
ENROLLMENT REPORT**



# Expanding health insurance coverage

- Increasing awareness
- Certified navigators-assisters
- Person-centered in-person and online enrollment options

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# Medicaid Expansion

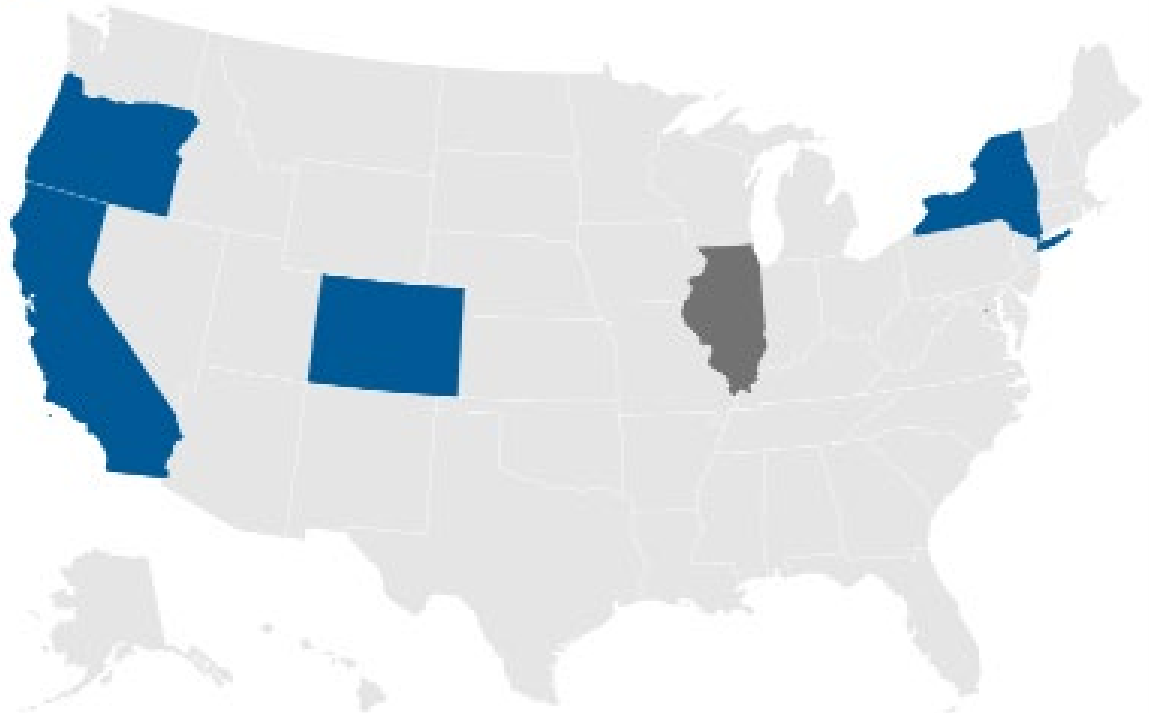
Figure 5

## State-Funded Coverage for Immigrant Children and Adults, July 2023

Click on the buttons below to see data for different groups of immigrants

Children **Adults**

■ State-Funded Coverage ■ State-Funded Coverage (Enrollment Closed)



SOURCE: KFF, "Medicaid and CHIP Eligibility, Enrollment, and Renewal Policies as States Prepare for the Unwinding of the Pandemic-Era, Continuous Enrollment Provision," April 2023, with additional updates from National Immigration Law Center, "Medical Assistance Programs for Immigrants in Various States," July 2023. • [PNG](#)

CALIFORNIA

## Medi-Cal will soon be open to all, 'papers or no papers.' She wants her neighbors to know



Juana Dominguez hands out information about Medi-Cal along Main Street in Los Angeles. The government program is gearing up for an expansion to serve eligible people of all ages regardless of their immigration status. (Wally Skolty / Los Angeles Times)

BY EMILY ALPERT HEYES, MELISSA GÓMEZ, PRISCILLA VEGA

DEC. 24, 2023 3 AM PT

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NEWS & STORIES / HEALTH

# Half of WA's undocumented immigrants are uninsured. For the first time, the state marketplace is open to them



**Eilis O'Neill**

November 09, 2023 / 9:04 am



# Q & A and your thoughts!

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*How can we identify  
policy-focused solutions  
that are right for  
Arizona?*